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ABSTRACT

There is a general consensus that school counseling is a profession in trouble. Most of the education reform movements underway in various states barely mention, if at all, the importance of school counseling, and counseling positions are in constant danger of being eliminated by school boards faced with budget restraints. Several factors contributing to this low profile and bad image include a lack of recognition of school counseling as a distinct profession, a lack of well-defined school-counselor roles, a burdensome amount of routine administrative assignments, and a very high counselor-student ratio. School counselors need to take steps to empower themselves. They will take a more central place in schools by claiming professional credibility, asserting their significance, and taking a more proactive role in their jobs. The Proactive Model of School Counseling presented here encourages counselors to widen their horizons, not only being responsive to the students seeking counseling on their own, but also reaching out to all students systematically, for the implementation of concrete agendas. The Proactive Model emphasizes the conceptual, operational, evaluative, public relations, and personal development of student counselors. These components are sequenced, interrelated, and precede one another in significance during implementation. Each component is discussed and suggestions for implementation given. (CC)

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Shifting Paradigms in Secondary School Counseling: Changing Incidentals to Essentials Through Proactive Approaches

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Running Head: Changing incidentals to essentials in school counseling

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(Abstract)

This article discusses the prevalent crisis in secondary school counseling and suggests several new paradigms to change the role of a school counselor from a peripheral to the central position.

Shifting Paradigms in Secondary School Counseling: Changing Incidentals to Essentials Through Proactive Approaches

As we are approaching the door steps of the 21st century, there is a general consensus that school counseling is a profession which is in deep trouble (American Association for Counseling and Development, 1987; Moles, 1991; Peer (1985); Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, 1986). School counseling positions considered as the ancillary service (Baker, 1992) and often seen as periphery but not essential (Aubrey, 1993) stand a constant risk of elimination whenever and wherever the school boards face budgetary constraints (Gross & Staino, 1988; McGowan, 1993).

Most of the Education Reform Movements in various states in response to a wake-up call of "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" (Gardner, 1983) remained either silent about school counseling (Herr, 1984; Hitchner & Tifft-Hitchner, 1987) or made only a slight reference to it (Walz, 1991). Aubrey (1993) maintains that "some reformers are aware of counselors but believe that if teaching conditions are vastly improved, teachers and administrators could replace counselors" (p. 232).

There are a number of factors that are contributing to the low professional visibility of school counselors, eroding public support for them and making counseling services seem incidental rather than essential. Lack of emphasis on school counseling as a distinct profession (American Counseling and Development, 1987), lack of well-defined school counselor's roles, goals and job

descriptions (Baker, 1992 ; Brown, 1989; Gorton & Ohlemacher, 1987), too many administrative routine assignments and too high counselor-student ratio that don't allow school counselors to use their special skills (Gross & Staino, 1988; Gysbers, 1990; Comission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, 1986) are some of the factors that have been identified repeatedly in professional literature.

As the least visible professionals, subservient to others as supporting staff, guidance counselors are at the brink of becoming endangered species (Gross and Staino, 1988), unless some drastic steps are taken to restructure the counseling programs nationwide. Since we not only like to survive but to prevail, it is high time that school counselors heed the advice of Pietrofesa and Vriend (1971) made a quarter of a century ago:

> Counselors can no longer afford to be subservient in the educational enterprise. They can't allow themselves to be tossed hither and yon based on the whims of administrators and teachers. (p. 39)

It is in the spirit of empowering the school counselors to gain their credibility, assert their significance, and make their own unique place in the school system and the professional community, the following Proactive Model of School Counseling is postulated.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Introduction To Proactive Model of School Counseling

Basically, the underlying professional zeitgeist of this model

is to shift reactive approaches to proactive approaches in school counseling. In addition being responsive to the daily demands of some students who seek counseling on their own, the primary focus of this model is to help school counselors reach out to all students in a systematic, well-planned manner for the implementation of some concrete agenda.

The Proactive Model of School Counseling (PMSC), developed by this author, has five major components: conceptual, operational, evaluational, public relations, and personal development (of the school counselor). All these components are sequenced, interrelated, and precede one another in significance from the implementation point of view. For example, the operational component is preceded by the conceptual component as philosophy and goals in conceptual component are considered important to justify the implementation of operational activities. In the same manner, the operational component is preceded by the evaluation component because evaluation can't be possible unless some activities are implemented. The Public Relations Component follows the Evaluation Component to give and receive feedback from external agencies. Finally, personal development of the counselor is followed by the public relations component to implement the received suggestions for improvement.

Discussion about major elements of each component is presented in the next section. Major purpose or goal for each major component

is presented in the lower section of the PMSC. The major purpose of the Conceptual Component is to set priorities or expectations of the program. The main goal of the Operational Component is to promote developmental equity in all areas of students. These developmental areas could range from academic concerns, racial and gender equity to academic, career, and other personal developmental tasks. The evaluation component is designed to assess excellence in the implementation of various counseling components and strategies. The results of the total counseling and guidance program are explained and shared with the local and professional community for accountability and to generate public support for the program. Finally, personal development of counselors is considered of utmost importance to promote their personal efficacy.

Discussion about Five Major Components of the PMSC

A. Conceptual Component

Conceptual Component is the blueprint for the total guidance and counseling program of a school. It is a road map that delineates directions for the program. All schools are different and unique from one another. Their goals, priorities, and needs are different. Based on the needs assessment survey, the school counselors must predetermine the needs of clientele they serve. However, they must assert that they have their own distinct program with a special agenda which is clearly different from teachers, administrators, and other professionals in the school. The school

counselors are not subservient to others, they enjoy their own distinct identity. They have their own plans to development for the affective development of their students. In the cognitive development of the students, they are experts to guide the teachers and administration in issues such as learning theories, learning styles and management of behaviors, time and stress. As societal changes are placing constantly new and heavy demands on schools to provide more than classroom instructional activities, the role of the school counselors is rapidly changing from incidental to essential. School counselors have a special role and responsibility to assist students in their affective development to help them function successfully in America's high-tech, complex, and challenging multicultural society (Baker, 1992).

It is important that counselors are guided by a pre-planned philosophy, in concurrence with the local school board policies and procedures, from which to develop their role and goals. It is the philosophy of a school guidance program that determines the scope, breadth and depth of a counselor's professional activities. In the absence of such proactive philosophy, Hart and Jacobi (1992) argue that school counselors,

> cannot independently establish priorities, advocate effectively for change, or approach their work in a proactive manner. Instead, counselors become reactive, responding to the priorities or needs of others, and accepting the role of ancillary or support staff. (p. 39)

B. Operational Component

The Operational Component is designed to translate philosophical goals of The Conceptual Component into practical actions. This component is the very center of action, where ideals are changed into realities. Clearly stated, understood, and implemented roles, functions, and responsibilities of a school counselor could become the nuts and bolts of the program to generate desired outcomes.

Organizational structure determines role, responsibilities and functions of the counseling program. It also could determine the flexibility, independence, and distinct identity a counselor could maintain in a given school system. For example, in a school, where a counselor is assigned too many administrative duties for the convenience of the administrative staff, naturally the school counseling program will be seriously jeopardized. It might be wise to state explicitly in school board guidelines that school counselors will not be assigned administrative duties including bus, cafeteria supervision or teaching assignments as a substitute teacher. It might also be necessary to restructure the organizational pattern of a school, to make counselor directly responsive not to the school principal but to the director of guidance services, district's central staff or assistant superintendent for instruction. However, it is important that a counselor is supervised by only those personnel who have training in counseling themselves (Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Borders,

1991; Dye & Borders, 1990; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). The major objective is to grant the school counselor time and freedom to implement the school guidance program in a proactive manner. To make a school counseling program more effective, administration could restructure the organizational pattern as follow:

Insert Table 2 About Here

This new structure would provide professional counselors to do things they are expected and trained to do. It is understandable that this new organization will cost more money. But if the administration, parents, and the school community are serious about meeting the counseling needs of the students, they must provide the means to do it.

The role of the school counselor has to be redefined and made distinct. There is more confusion and lack of clarity about the school counselor's role than anything else in the professional literature (Bonebrake and Bergers, 1984; Morse and Russell, 1988; Partin, 1993; Thomas, 1989). Rather than being distinct professionals, school counselors seem more like technicians (Hallohan, 1990) or administrators and teachers (Wilson, 1985). School counselors can't afford to remain "all things to all people" (Hitchner & Tifft-Hitchner, 1987, p.3) anymore. They also have to understand the limitations of their time and expertise. In order to be effective, a counselor can't advise everybody on everything.

School counselors must learn their boundaries. As counselors, we need to clarify not only what we are supposed to do, but also what we would not and should not do.

Use of Additional Resources

In order to successfully implement an effective counseling program, a counselor will need additional help of a secretary and a school registrar or an education technician. A counselor must be freed from paraprofessional duties of checking credits, scheduling, preparing transcripts, and receiving telephone calls for general information, issuing hall passes or permission slips, etc. School counselors are professionals. They must be treated as such and they must present themselves as professionals. Freeing counselors from daily routine duties will give them additional time to attend to their professional responsibilities.

With a high counselor-student ratio, it is imperative that a school counselor should consider to developing their own professional network to enhance their effectiveness. Counselors could start a peer counseling program, make referral to outside agencies, and train teachers to conduct some guidance activities. With all the professional training counselors receive, they are highly competent professionals but they become ineffective when they are assigned too many non-professional and quasi-administrative duties (Gross & Staiano, 1987). It is extremely important that counselors receive training in organizational skills

to become effective change agents (Hart & Jacobi, 1992), a central role that they must play.

Major Aspects of the Guidance Program

A guidance counseling agenda for the students is important and lengthy one. A primary goal of any counseling program is to assist students to achieve their academic success.

It is imperative that a counselor becomes "an academic conscience" of the school (Hart & Jacobi, 1992) to help students translate their academic aspirations into actions. Cognitive development, a major concentration of teaching, is not possible without the affective development of the students. Counselors are responsible for creating "a positive, supportive, people-oriented school climate... from which the other correlates of effectiveness can be implemented" (Thomas, 1989, p. 249). The psychological climate of any school is the guidance curriculum of a school counselor (Kaplan & Geoffrey, 1990).

Major Components

Six major elements of a guidance program described by Shertzer and Stone (1981) could still serve as a classic model for any high school guidance program. However, for simplicity and clarity's sake this author proposes only the first four of them: an appraisal component, an informational component, a counseling component, and consulting component (p.41). Fifth, a planning, placement, and follow-up component could be a part of informational component

while evaluation comporent is discussed in more details separately as a major part of this Proactive Model of School Counseling. If the counselors could demonstrate their skills and knowledge-based expertise by concentrating on these four major components, they will empower themselves with the legitimate power inherent in their role to receive well-deserved respect and recognition. These components are not new and are known by other names such as testing, personal and educational counseling, consulting and career counseling. But there is a new emphasis upon them for proactive counselors to demonstrate their expertness in these areas what other school professionals lack it.

Characteristics of A Proactive Approach:

The Proactive approach to school counseling warrants new, pre-planned, well-thought out implementation techniques. A number of key words which characterize this fresh approach are,

Comprehensive approach. Traditional counseling programs in schools lack systematic, sequential, coordinated implementation from grades K-12. There is no planned program continuity between elementary school and secondary school counseling programs. "Counseling remains an ancillary, rather than a core, component of K through 12 education" (Hart & Jacobi, 1992, p. 40). To remedy this problem, Gysbers (1990) has developed a comprehensive developmental guidance program which has a basic tenet that "there are effective linkages among all grade levels, kindergarten

through twelve... activities begun in elementary school are continued, as appropriate, in the next grade levels" (p.169).

A K-12 Conceptual Model of School Counseling is presented below to demonstrate how school counselors could implement such a program.

Insert Table 3 About Here

According to the special needs of a given school, counselors may feel free to revise this model to help their students. They may also coordinate their efforts with both elementary and secondary school counselors in the same school district for articulation purposes.

Balanced approach. Traditionally school counselors spend most of their time on the benavioral and emotional problems but fail to meet the developmental needs of the majority of their students (Baker, 1992; Gysbers, 1990; Hart & Jacobi, 1992; Moles, 1991; Nugent, 1994). Shertzer (1991) laments, "Much counselor effort goes into crises management and remediation and programs for prevention are short changed" (p.30).

To become proactive, it is high time that counselors use a balanced approach to counseling and heed Baker's (1992) admonition:

> Counselors in the twenty-first century must be able to provide prevention services that meet and enhance developmental needs and treatment services when interventions are needed. Counselors will need to be flexible in reacting to differing consumer demands and be proactive in providing services that enhance personal development and coping skills. (p. 1)

Advocacy approach . Proactive approach is an advocacy approach to promote and support student interests. When a school is not responsive to the needs of students or there are some school practices that are detrimental to the interests of students, a counselor might have to make a difficult choice either to meet the needs of the students or the demands of the institution. Proactive counselors serve as strong advocates of students when they have to face such matters as "confidentiality, injustice to students, inappropriate curricula, incompetent teachers, and unresponsive administrators" (Aubrey, 1970, p. 6).

In America's challenging multicultural society, a school counselor could play a significant role in promoting gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and racial equities. For instance, career counseling for non-traditional occupations for both sexes, tolerance for different sexual orientations, psychological androgyny, prejudice reduction, and equity for exceptional students could rank high on the guidance curriculum of a proactive counselor. Generally speaking, "The culture of a school is made of several elements. The major elements are purpose, quality, affection, collegiality, teamwork, recognition and character" (Thomas, 1989, p. 249). A school counselor can serve as an advocate to promote these qualities among the diverse student population of a school.

In their advocacy role, school counselors can collaborate

with teachers to maximize potential of their students through information about different learning styles, motivational strategies, and new pedagogical approaches. Hart & Jacobi (1992) assert that "counselors should point out where and how teachers are creating obstacles and barriers to student achievement, and help teachers acquire new skills" (p. 60).

There is a general consensus that group guidance affects positively the academic achievement of the students (Gerler & Anderson, 1987; Gerler, Drew, & Mohr, 1990; Lee, 1993; St. Clair, 1989). The proactive counselors must provide educational counseling. As advocates of students' academic interests, counselors can tailor a number of group guidance activities to include, memory skills, time management and stress management skills, goal-setting, note-taking and test-taking strategies (Coy & Sears, 1991).

A network approach. In order to reach out to all students in some meaningful way, specially when counselor-student ratio in some schools is as high as 1 to 500 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1990) and student problems require enormous amount of time, networking with others is not a matter of luxury but a dire necessity. A counselor can build a large support group by developing a systematic, long-term liaison with a number of diverse groups within and outside the school. Within a school, students trained as peer counselors can effectively present

topics such as self-esteem, peer-pressure, time-management, etc. to lower grade students. They can also serve as escorts for new students, work in guidance offices, assist other students with career materials, and even work as peer-tutors (Gysbers, 1990).

Similarly teachers trained by counselors could provide some group guidance activities in interpersonal skills, developing friendships, lifestyle decisions, developing self-discipline, and leadership skills. Hart and Jacobi (1992) assert that "Counselors should train all school staff, from support staff through senior faculty and administrators, to contribute to the guidance function" (p.49). Baker (1992) places greater emphasis on pedagogical services and maintains that they are the "mainstay of the prevention function" (p. 63). Since these services are basically instructional in nature, teachers can be extremely helpful in implementing them as classroom guidance activities.

Since parents have a strong and direct impact on their children's personal development, their role in counseling and guidance can't be ignored. Counselors must reach out to parents for contributions in the educational and career planning (Borders & Drury, 1992; Lopez & Andrews, 1987) and even more in personal counseling (Feingold, 1991; Wilcoxon & Comas, 1987).

Broadly speaking, counseling and guidance services are a shared responsibility of parents, school, and community. Proactive counselors must look for support from the community and develop

network support systems with various community agencies (Herr, 1991; NASFAA and ACE; 1989; NCCP, 1986). Partnership with these agencies is crucial to receive special help for diverse services through referrals. In some cases, counselors might have to count on the local business community for financial help and job placement of the students.

Implementation Strategies:

Proactive counselors preplan their activities in advance to implement their guidance program, they are not just responsive to day to day situations and problems. Some examples of their pre-planning activities might include: developing a school guidance committee, conducting assessment surveys to prioritize student needs, planning an annual calendar for guidance activities, and making provisions for group guidance sessions. Proactive counselors also prepare and lobby for their own special budget for guidance and counseling services and try to procure necessary materials and equipment which is useful for their clients. They definitely don't want to overlook the community resources which might strengthen their program.

One of the major obstacles in implementing the strong guidance and counseling program is to find time. Proactive counselors are both generous and flexible with their time. These counselors are willing to work on non-traditional hours to make consultation services available to working parents (Greer & Richardson, 1992).

Sometimes, rather than working on regular hours from 8 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., they may make themselves available from 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. In larger school systems, counselors could rotate different shifts to discharge their professional duties. Furthermore, to provide direct client service to all students in some meaningful manner, proactive counselors make use of all available technological help by using VCR's and computers, etc. on a regular basis (Jason, Pillen, & Olson, 1986; Lee & Pulvino, 1991).

C. EVALUATION COMPONENT

Like all other school professionals, counselors are accountable to the tax-paying public for the quality of their services (ASCA, 1988; Baker, 1992; Housley, McDaniel, & Underwood; Nugent, 1994; Vacc, Rhyne-Winkler, & Poidevant, 1993). Historically, most of the proposed school counseling models included evaluation as their integral component (Gysbers, 1990; Helliwell & Jones, 1975; Krumboltz, 1974; Shertzer & Stone, 1981). But practically speaking, preplanned systematic evaluation of counseling programs and accountability of school counselors have largely remained an unaccomplished task. If there has been any evaluation at all that has been misdirected (Gorton & Ohlemacher, 1987). Mostly counselors are held accountable for "processes" but not for "outcomes", "that is, they are typically evaluated on the basis of the number of activities or programs they conduct, the number of students they see....For most part, counselors are not

evaluated on the basis of results" (Hart & Jacobi, 1992, p. 43).

Proactive counselors don't undermine the significance of their evaluation rather they seek out every opportunity to publicize their accomplishments to demonstrate that counseling does make positive impact on the lives of their clients. It is hoped that such a proactive approach to evaluation would enhance the credibility of guidance programs with students, parents, teachers, administrators and the community at large.

Proactive Approach to Evaluation:

Proactive approach to evaluation is a twofold. First, it is designed to assess the effectiveness of guidance programs and secondly, it is planned to determine the personal efficiency of counselors to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

The highlights of this proactive approach to evaluation include,

A Deliberate Approach. Proactive counselors make deliberate efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of their guidance programs. They welcome feedback from everyone involved and are eager to use this information to enhance the satisfaction of their clients. They are not interested in evaluation for evaluation's sake, but rather they like to sharpen their skills to better serve the interests of their clients. For this reason, these counselors engage in action research, use various standardized or self-developed surveys and other instruments to find out how they could improve themselves.

A systematic approach. Proactive approach to evaluation is not

sporadic. It is systematic in the sense that a counselor has developed plans to conduct this evaluation on a regular basis. It could be done once a year or twice a year. Less than a year is missing the necessary information, more than twice a year might be spending an excessive amount of time.

A comprehensive approach. The focus of this approach is upon the total guidance program, not on only one component. Proactive evaluation is also comprehensive in the sense that it invites feedback from not only students, teachers, and administrators, but also from parents, central office staff, and community members.

Focus on outcomes not on processes. The major emphasis of this type of evaluation is to report what has been accomplished, not on a list of activities which were planned or in which a counselor has simply participated. The main question is, "Did counseling make the difference to affect beneficial changes?"

Proactive counselors "need to set evaluation as a priority that is essential to the system support. They must reach out for assistance, if necessary, and welcome strategies that may strengthen their programs" (Perry, 1993, p. 46).

D. PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENT

In a market-driven society like ours, the underlying major force for success is to "woo and win". "Counseling, which traditionally has received poor press and is regularly negatively viewed both in the public media and professional publications, is

particularly disadvantaged in a free choice climate" (Walz, 1991, p. 46). It is high time that proactive counselors educate others about their services and successes and solicit their support through a systematic plan of public relations activities (Shields, 1986).

A broad base of support can be built by reaching out to students through school newspapers and sharing information with teachers and administration at faculty meetings, and attending school board meetings on a regular basis to inform its members. Counselors also should seek out some representation of parents and school board members on the guidance committee who could advise them about site-based decisions and also lobby for guidance and counseling services.

Proactive counselors take initiatives to address Parent-Teacher Associations and reach out to the community members through local newspapers, radio and television talk shows. They also watch for the interests of their profession by informing the legislative bodies at local, state, and national level. Counselors have to "toot their own horns" to get proper support and recognition. Sometimes, it might be necessary that counselors collaborate with other professional associations to empower themselves.

E.PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Proactive counselors aspire to be both competent and effective. In order to remain highly competent, they keep

themselves abreast of the latest knowledge and skills in counseling by taking classes, attending workshops, and participating in related professional activities. They could update their knowledge through continuing education and maintain high level of professionalism by attaining licenses and specialty certifications.

To remain effective, proactive counselors must be knowledgeable about local school board policies, professional, legal and ethical issues, current practices, concerns, and trends of their profession. Above all, proactive counselors are highly innovative, conscientious, results-oriented, well-organized, willing to learn and are always eager to launch new initiatives to help their clients.

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TABLE 1

PROACTIVE MODEL OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

A. Major Components	Conceptual	Operational	Evaluation	Public Relations	Personal Development
B. Major Elements	1. Philosophy	1. Organizational structure	1. Preplanned & systematic approach	1. Focus on services and successes	1. Continuing education
	2. Goals and objectives	2. Additional resources	2. A comprehensive approach	2. A systematic plan of public relations	2. Professional workshops
	3. Priorities	3. Major aspects/ Components	3. Accountability issues	3. Information sharing with local and national media	3. Attain licenses and specialty certifications
	4. Distinctive features of the program	4. Characteristics of proactive approach	4. Focus on outcomes not on processes	4. Lobbying for legislative support	4. School board policies and procedures
	5. Special Agenda for the year	5. Implementation strategies	5. Counselor efficiency & program effectiveness	5. Collaboration and information sharing with other professional organizations	5. State guidelines and national trends
C. Major Goals	-Expectations-	-Equity-	-Excellence-	-Explanations-	-Efficacy-

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TABLE 2

SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES

A PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

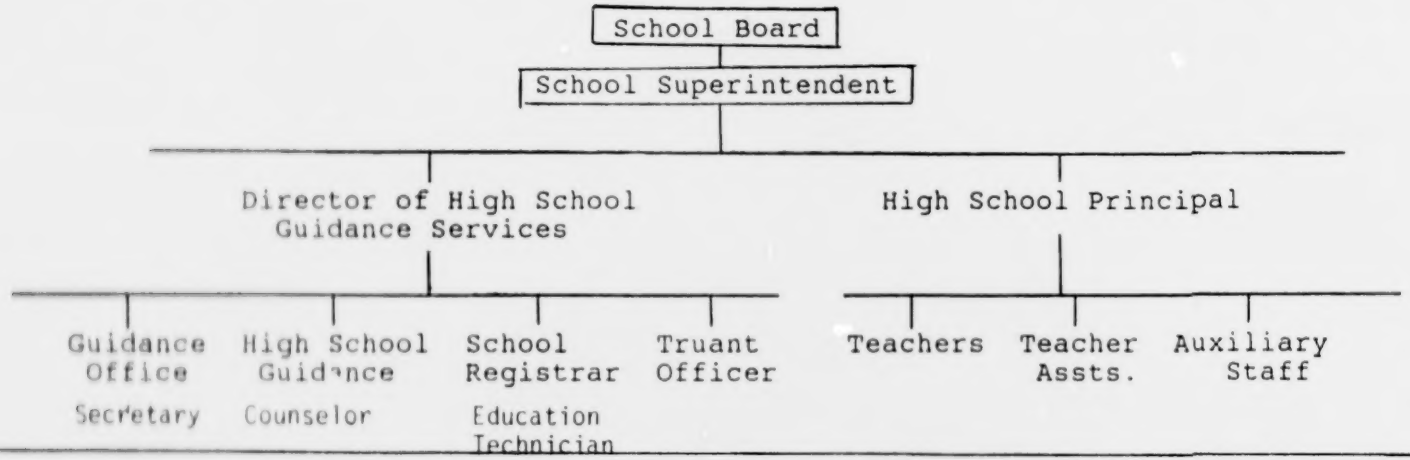

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Table 3

K-12 Conceptual Model of School Counseling

Areas of Developmental Concern:

Cognitive	Affective	Psychomotor
Teaching	Counseling	Vocational Education

SCHOOL SETTING — Clinical Setting

Examples:

Developmental	Preventive	Education & Career	Adjustment	Diagnostic & Remedial	Crisis	Psychotherapy
1. Nutrition Exercise	1. Drugs Alcoholism	1. Academic Concerns	1. Depression	1. Study Habits	1. Sexual Abuse	All psychopathological & developmental concerns which might require long-term therapy and external help.
2. Communication Skills	2. Youth & Law	2. Decision Making	2. Stress Anxiety	2. Learning Styles	2. Physical Abuse	
3. Self-concept	3. Suicide Preventions	3. Self-Assessment	3. Neglect Abandonment	3. Learning Disabilities	3. Grief Bereavement	
4. Life Goals	4. Health Risk Reductions	4. Careers & Values	4. Anger	4. Thinking Skills	4. Violence in Family	
5. Sexual Values	5. Teenage Pregnancy	5. Occupational Orientation	5. Guilt	5. Overcoming Shyness & Inferiority	5. Loss of Love	
6. Social Skills	6. STD'S	6. ACT	6. Children of Alcoholics	6. Conflict Resolution	6. Anger Control	
7. Multicultural Awareness	7. AIDS	7. Study Skills	7. Racial Concerns	7. Giftedness	7. Violence in School	
	8. Smoking	8. Time Management	8. Divorce	8. Behavioral Disabilities	8. Sexual Harassment	
	9. Rape	9. Military Orientation	9. Stepfamilies			
	10. Child Abuse	10. Moral Values	10. Single Parent Families			
	11. Gun Risk		11. New Schools			
			12. Moving			
			13. Fear			

Starting Point:

Early Childhood — Pre-adolescence — Adolescence — Early Adulthood

Nature of Counseling:

← Group Counseling → ← Individual Counseling → Referral to Outside Agencies

Classroom Instruction — Office Hours

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